

Global Issues



Global Issues – Addressing tobacco use and control internationally with recommendations in each of the six other breakout session topic areas

International Studies

Few studies were found that directly address the issue of tobacco use and control internationally. Two studies on smoking are being conducted in Canada. Another study is examining cancer risks among textile workers in China, with smoking as one of the variables being tracked. Two studies are examining the effects of smoking, using data from the Swedish Medical Birth Register.

International Activities

Several activities were identified that are either international in scope or are focused on smoking in locations other than the USA. A meeting is being sponsored by the World Health Organization in April of 2003 that will focus on women and tobacco in Africa. The Association of European Cancer Leagues held a media campaign entitled “European Week Against Cancer 2001: Women and Tobacco” and the International Network of Women Against Tobacco has a website that includes information on smoking in Australia, Canada, England, Scotland, Thailand, and the USA.

Title: Cancer Risks Among Textile Workers in China
Principal Investigator: Checkoway, Harvey
Institution: Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, WA
Funding Agency: National Cancer Institute
Project ID: CA80180
Project Funding Period: 10 April 2000 – 31 March 2004

Abstract: The manufacture of cotton, wool, and synthetic fiber textiles is one of the world's largest industries. Moreover, some specific exposures within the industry are either known or suspected carcinogens. In spite of these considerations, existing knowledge of cancer risks to textile workers is based on fragmentary epidemiologic data. We are proposing an epidemiologic study in a cohort of roughly 267,000 women employees in the textile industry in Shanghai, China. The study cohort has been enumerated previously for a randomized trial of the efficacy of breast self exam, and is well characterized with respect to demographic, reproductive, and lifestyle factors, including cigarette smoking and alcohol use. We will focus on the following exposure/disease associations as primary hypotheses, all of which have been suggested but remain largely inconclusive in the literature: cotton and wool dusts and sinonasal cancer; formaldehyde and nasopharyngeal cancer; cotton dust and lung cancer; textile dyes and urinary bladder cancer; synthetic fibers and colon cancer. In a more exploratory mode, we will investigate textile exposures as potential etiologic factors for breast cancer. The study will consist of two related phases. The first phase will involve comparisons of site-specific cancer risks between the cohort and rates in the general population of Shanghai women during 1989-97. Incidence rates will be compared with city rates for the entire cohort and for the various manufacturing sectors (cotton, wool, synthetics, silk, dyeing, and finished apparel). The second, more in-depth analytic phase will be a case-cohort study nested within the cohort. The case groups will include incident, during 1989-97, cancers of the lung (expected number 1248), sinonasal passage (21), nasopharynx (100), bladder (81), colon (433), and breast (1196). A common referent subcohort (N=2496), will be selected as an age-stratified random sample from the study base of women textile workers. Historical exposure reconstruction will be performed for cotton, wool, silk, and synthetic fiber dusts, dyes, and formaldehyde to support dose-response estimation. The proposed study will be comprised of unquestionably the world's largest, most well characterized cohort of textile workers, and should therefore generate important information that is needed for cancer risk reduction strategies for women in China and elsewhere, including the United States.

Title: "Smoke In My Eyes" A qualitative Study of Young Women & Cigarette Smoking
Principal Investigator: Haines, Rebecca J.
Institution: University of Toronto, Toronto, ON
Funding Agency: National Cancer Institute of Canada
Project ID: Not available
Project Funding Period: Not available

Abstract: In recent years, it has been widely recognized that a focus on gender issues is of central importance to research on youth and tobacco control, as a result of statistical data demonstrating the higher and sustained rates of cigarette smoking among female teenagers in western nations including Canada. To the extent that quantitative approaches have dominated past studies it has been acknowledged that researchers have yet to account for the role of gender as it influences smoking status. Despite the fact that the knowledge-base on female adolescent smoking has expanded considerably during the past decade, there are still major gaps in the research as to why young women initiate smoking, and relatively little is known about the roles and functions smoking plays within their everyday lives.

Recent qualitative research has demonstrated that researchers must address young people's social representations of smoking, constructed through peer interactions. For young women, smoking behaviour contains powerful cultural meanings about adult femininity, sexuality and social status. Smoking also fulfills a range of functions for young women, in the context of home, school, and leisure settings, and during the critical period of transition to the labour market. Additionally, it has been suggested that there are unique aspects of female peer culture and social groupings that determine smoking behaviour. While this research has significantly advanced the qualitative understanding of young women's smoking behaviour, for the most part past studies have serious limitations as they position qualitative findings as merely "supplemental" to existing quantitative evidence, and have yet to use these insights to the construct an alternative theoretical paradigm that would guide new smoking prevention strategies.

To address these gaps in Canadian tobacco control research, I plan to apply a critical social science perspective to an analysis of the contextual settings and cultural meanings of young women's cigarette smoking. Crucial to the aims of my project, this approach is well-positioned to address how smoking prevention strategies focus on young women as an "at-risk" group, but neglect the meaning of smoking within the context of adolescent life-worlds. My approach will draw from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and the insights that his theoretical framework can offer. This stance ties together structure (i.e. 'the macro') and agency (i.e. 'the micro'), through viewing day-to-day health practices as a product of an individual's social location or habitus. The framework is well-suited to a qualitative understanding of how the meanings and functions of tobacco use can differ according to habitus or the "taste-classes" which inform young women's everyday health and collective lifestyle practices.

My research sample will be drawn from diverse, low-income communities in Toronto. Through an analysis of the everyday social contexts in which smoking takes place, my research will explore what smoking means to young women "in their own words" and life-worlds, and how "smoking identities" are situated within the context of family, peer, and social interactions - mediated by variables such as gender, class, ethnoracial group, and school factors. My approach will focus on the roles and functions of smoking within young women's lives across three domains/questions: 1) Micro (self/subjective): How do young women view themselves and others who smoke? What are the roles and functions of smoking at the level of the self? 2) Meso (social/peer relationships): How are smoking identities connected to young women's dating, sexuality, and romantic relationships? What is the role of interactions with existing or potential partners in influencing smoking status? 3) Macro (socio-structural): What are the contextual dynamics of teen smoking within public and private social spaces? How is smoking behaviour informed by the broader social class context of neighborhood and community?

In addition to qualitative interviewing, the project design includes use of the Photovoice visual methodology. This approach will provide young women with an opportunity to construct and interpret self-images of tobacco use. These research findings will have implications for both the conceptualization of young women's smoking as a health problem and for the design of gender and age-specific tobacco policies and prevention programs. In closing, the spirit of my project is articulated quite eloquently by Wearing et al. who argue that, "young women require strategies or resources to fulfill their need for pleasure and to resist the patriarchal society in which they find themselves, but they have a right to choose their experiences without damaging their health."

Title: Cigarette Smoking and Post-Partum Breast Cancer Risk
Principal Investigator: Hsieh, Chung-Cheng
Institution: University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA
Funding Agency: National Cancer Institute
Project ID: CA88891
Project Funding Period: 13 September 2001 – 31 July 2003

Abstract: Cigarette smoking has been hypothesized to have both carcinogenic and anti-estrogenic effects that may offset each other to produce no overall effect on breast cancer risk. A full-term pregnancy also appears to have opposing effects on breast cancer risk: 1) an adverse effect shortly after delivery and 2) a beneficial effect over time. If the transient increase risk of breast cancer is due to the growth-enhancing consequences of elevated pregnancy hormones on already initiated cells, then cigarette smoking during pregnancy, through its anti-estrogenic effect, can be expected to dampen this risk. Conversely, with its carcinogenic effect, cigarette smoking during pregnancy might also reduce the long-term protection against breast cancer afforded by a full-term pregnancy. We propose to examine the effects of cigarette smoking on the risk of postpartum breast cancer occurring at different intervals following delivery. We will use a database that links together the Swedish Medical Birth Register, National Cancer Register, and Register of Causes of Death. Members of the study population are all mothers who delivered a liveborn or stillborn baby after a gestation period of at least 28 weeks in Sweden between 1973 and 1998. We have adopted a nested case-control sampling design to allow more efficient analyses. Cases are approximately 3,500 women who had one or more childbirths between 1973 and 1998 and who had a breast cancer diagnosis during the same period. For each case subject, five controls who were born in the same year as the index case, were alive at the date of the diagnosis for the index case, and had not been diagnosed with breast cancer by that date, will be randomly selected from the source population. Logistic regression analysis will be applied to examine cigarette smoking as a risk determinant for postpartum breast cancer adjusting for age, parity, and age at first full-term pregnancy.

Title: Effects of Smokeless Tobacco Use on Pregnancy
Principal Investigator: Levine, Richard J.
Institution: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Bethesda, MD
Funding Agency: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
Project ID: HD008745
Project Funding Period: Not available

Abstract: Smoking cigarettes during pregnancy adversely affects pregnancy outcomes. Smokeless tobacco is thought to be a safer alternative to smoking because combustion products are not generated. We are studying the effects of smokeless tobacco on pregnancy outcomes in a retrospective cohort study of women in the Swedish Medical Birth Register. We will compare pregnancy outcomes of those who used snuff daily, but did not smoke cigarettes; those who smoked cigarettes daily, but did not use snuff; and those who used neither product. Associations between tobacco exposure and birth weight, preterm delivery, and preeclampsia will be examined.

Title: The Domestication of Addiction: The Marketing of Tobacco Products to Women in North America 1920-1950

Principal Investigator: Warsh, Cheryl

Institution: Malaspina University College, Nanaimo, BC

Funding Agency: National Cancer Institute of Canada

Project ID: Not available

Project Funding Period: 1 August 2000 – 31 July 2003

Abstract: This project is an investigation of the relationship between the construction of gender in mass culture and the increased use by women of tobacco products in the 20th century. Because smoking traditionally has been a male preserve, the social acceptance of cigarettes as products for female use, or domestication, was a not inconsequential shift in mores. This shift would begin to take place in the 1920s, during a period in the United States and most Canadian provinces of prohibitory legislation regarding beverage alcohol, another controversial substance. The timing demonstrated that the forces of the mass market were beginning their ascendancy over the influences of religion and reform. Through their exposure to advertising, marketing strategies, films and popular magazines, American and Canadian women were persuaded that smoking was normal and even a chic activity to pursue.

I will be examining advertisements in popular magazines from the 1920s to the 1950s (by which time the marketing victory was complete) to determine shifts in their depiction of women and men. Depictions of both genders in the act of smoking will of course be noted, but not exclusively. Favorable or idealistic lifestyles or behaviour depicted in tobacco advertisements which would be associated positively by the readers with the products also will be analyzed. While such lifestyle advertising has been investigated over the last 30 years, there is more work to be done on the earlier and pivotal period.

I also will be looking at the strategies, techniques, and goals of a variety of marketing campaigns, through the examination of the papers of Edward Bernays, one of America's foremost public relations agents. Bernays is perhaps best known for his marketing strategies to promote cigarette smoking among women in the 1920s. In his memoirs, he emphasized his personal influence, albeit regretfully. Even accounting for self-aggrandizement, Bernays's influence was considerable, particularly in linking cigarette smoking with women's liberation, sophistication and modernity. With respect to Canada, I will be focusing upon the centre of the tobacco industry, Montreal, by examining the extant records of Imperial Tobacco and MacDonald Tobacco, trade journals, newspapers and government documents to determine the marketing strategies and techniques of the major Canadian manufacturers and their influences upon the host community.

Activity Type: Media Campaign

Title: European Week against Cancer 2001: Women and Tobacco

Sponsor: Association of European Cancer Leagues

Date: September 5, 2001

Description/Agenda: (Press Release) Smoking - an increasing threat to womens' health and well-being in Europe

The single most dangerous health habit among women in Europe is smoking. Tobacco use is one of the greatest burdens to the health and well-being of women around the world. At present it kills over half a million women each year, but this is expected to double by the year 2020. In some countries, lung cancer has already surpassed breast cancer as the main cause of cancer deaths among women.

It is especially young women who smoke more than men. Since 1970's, the number of smokers have decreased more among men than women. World wide, the smoking habit is spreading especially among women in lower social classes, who quit smoking less often than other women. Finding ways to make lower class girls adopt a smoke-free lifestyle is a great challenge to schools and health care professionals.

Lung cancer is rising more rapidly among women than among men in the European Union. Alarm bells are already ringing in some countries where lung cancer is currently more common among women under 45 years of age than men of the same age.

Tobacco free - it's a beautiful thing

Women should not let themselves be fooled by the strong and persuasive messages of the tobacco industry, but realise that the best thing they can do themselves is to stop smoking. In addition to the indisputable and grave health effects, smoking has harmful effects on the appearance, skin, dental and oral hygiene. These effects appear relatively soon after smoking initiation. Most of them are fortunately reversible after stopping smoking. The damage on skin and the subsequent formation of wrinkles is irreversible, if smoking continues for decades. After 20 years of smoking the skin of a 40-year old woman has aged an additional 20 years.

It is never too late to stop smoking. Tens of thousands of women succeed in smoking cessation every year in Europe alone. During the European Week Against Cancer on October 8 - 14 women are encouraged to stop smoking and provided with advice and support on how to succeed in this.

The "Women and Tobacco" -campaign is targeted to women in the age of 20 - 35 years. During the week a variety of actions are taking place around Europe to promote reduction in womens' smoking. The methods include conferences, advertising campaigns, media launches, press conferences, meetings and discussion groups, distribution of posters, leaflets and postcards, dissemination of cessation guidelines and advice on how to stop smoking. The campaign will be carried out in 20 European countries (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and UK). The European Week Against Cancer is an annual health promotion campaign which has been organised since 1989. It is a joint effort of non-profit cancer fighting organisations and their partners. On the pan-European level the action is co-ordinated by the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL).

Activity Type: Meeting

Title: African Women and Tobacco Conference

Sponsor: The World Health Organisation

Date: April 2003

Description/Agenda: (Call for Abstracts) We invite abstracts for 10-minute oral presentations on any aspects of women and tobacco in Africa. These may present findings of research, discuss interventions, evaluation of interventions or conceptual papers. We would particularly welcome contributions on:

- Gender issues in trading or farming tobacco
- Youth and tobacco use – with a particular focus on girls/young women
- Environmental tobacco smoke (second-hand smoke)
- Causes and consequences of tobacco use among women
- Marketing tobacco to women
- Tobacco control policy and legislation

- Litigation – an option for Africa?

Activity Type: Website

Title: International Network of Women Against Tobacco (<http://www.inwat.org>)

Sponsor: International Network of Women Against Tobacco

Date: Not available

Description/Agenda: (Home Page Description) The International Network of Women Against Tobacco (INWAT) was founded in 1990 by women tobacco control leaders to address the complex issues of tobacco use among women and young girls.

INWAT

- Provides contacts, primarily women, to individuals and organizations working in tobacco control.
- Collects and distributes information regarding global women and tobacco issues.
- Shares strategies to counter tobacco advertising and promotion.
- Supports the development of women-centered tobacco use prevention and cessation programs.
- Assists in the organization and planning of conferences on tobacco control.
- Collaborates on the development of publications regarding women and tobacco issues.
- Promotes female leadership.

The website includes links to Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General 2001; the WHO Report on Women and Smoking, the INWAT Europe: Current Awareness Bulletin; Filtered Policy - Women and Tobacco in Canada; and Femmes and Tabac. Links to fact sheets on women and smoking from Australia, Canada, England, Scotland, Thailand, and the USA are also listed.